

STOP TB USA* - ADVOCACY UPDATE!

* Formerly known as the U.S. National Coalition for Elimination of Tuberculosis (NCET).

Our thanks to **STOP TB USA** partner the American Thoracic Society (ATS) and to ATS's Nuala Moore for the following report on today's Senate TB Hearing at which STOP TB USA Chair Dr. Randall Reves testified along with CDC's Dr. Kenneth G. Castro, New York City's Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, and AERAS' Dr. Jerald C. Sadoff.

Dear TB Advocates:

The following is a rough summary of today's Senate TB hearing. Randall Reves did an outstanding job representing Stop TB/NTCA/ATS. The domestic TB bill will be considered by the Senate HELP Committee on 11/13.

This U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing was chaired by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) - *Protecting the U.S. From Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis: Reinvesting in Control and New Tools Research* - October 30, 2007.

HELP Committee members in attendance: Brown, Enzi (R-WY), Ranking member, Coburn (R-OK), Allard (R-CO), Burr (R-NC), Murkowski (R-AK).

Witnesses:

Dr. Kenneth G. Castro, Director, Div. of TB Elimination, CDC

Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, Commissioner, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Dr. Jerald C. Sadoff, President and CEO, AERAS Global TB Vaccine Foundation

Dr. Randall Reves, Professor of Medicine, Infectious Diseases, University of Colorado; Medical Director, Denver Metro Tuberculosis Clinic; Chairman, Stop TB USA

Sen. Brown opened the hearing with a brief overview of the burden of TB globally and domestically. On drug resistant TB, he referred to the Advisory Council for the Elimination of TB's (ACET) statement in 10/2006 that XDR-TB could become a "Trojan horse that will set back our country's ability to control TB for decades." Sen. Brown also praised Lee Reichman for his contributions to TB.

Dr. Castro's testimony covered the epidemiology of TB, including the rise of drug resistance, its prevalence in the US, CDC's role in domestic TB control, including the agency's research capabilities, the role of state and local TB control, and research and health care workforce training needs.

Dr. Frieden's testimony focused on New York City's TB crisis in the early 1990's, pointing out that it was in large part due to funding cuts. He listed treatment, monitoring, strong health systems and research as the critical elements to effective TB control.

Dr. Sadoff discussed TB research needs, particularly on a vaccine, described the Aeras product development partnership model and the need for increased public and private support for TB research.

Dr. Reves used the story of a TB patient in Denver to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of state public health systems, including comprehensive diagnosis and treatment, and emphasized the need for new TB diagnostic and treatment tools.

Sen. Brown's questions to Dr. Castro focused on the costs of drug resistant TB treatment, quarantine guidelines and CDC's TB research role and isoniazid preventative therapy. On the research question, Dr. Castro explained that CDC's research in TB began in the 1960's due to the agency's public health expertise in TB and has expanded to include multi-site clinical drug trials, epidemiological studies and other translational research areas.

Sen. Coburn asked Dr. Castro for estimates on CDC's TB research and total TB budgets. Dr. Castro estimated the research budget at about \$15 million and the total TB budget at \$138 million. Coburn explained that he is hesitant to consider disease-specific legislation and prefers to keep decision-making with scientists rather than the government.

Sen. Allard (R-CO) asked Dr. Castro about clinical trials for latent TB, HIV-TB screening, and the incidence of TB in immigrants. Responding to a question on the fall of U.S.-based TB cases vs. the increase in foreign-born cases, Dr. Castro emphasized that although this point is true, racial disparities persist among U.S. minority groups including African Americans and more progress is needed in that area.

Sen. Burr (R-NC) questioned Dr. Castro about CDC's specific guidelines for airline travel, citing a letter he and Sen. Gregg wrote to CDC about last year on proposed regulation changes to air travel/quarantine guidelines. He then questioned Dr. Castro about CDC's initial drug susceptibility testing in the Andrew Speaker case that initially showed extensively drug resistance. Dr. Castro emphasized the deficiency in TB testing methods, pointing to the need for better diagnostics.

Additional questions & comments: Sen. Brown questioned Dr. Reves about health workforce needs on TB. Sen. Burr questioned Dr. Reves about what CDC can do to significantly change the response to TB. Dr. Reves responded that CDC's research needs to be significantly expanded, particularly clinical trials networks. Sen. Burr asked Dr. Frieden for specific strategies, which he responded to by pointing to strong education among health providers and sufficient public health resources. Sen. Murkowski commented about AK's high TB case rate, particularly among the homeless there.